



St. Mary's Catholic High School, Dubai – Muhaisnah

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Written by:	Student Pastoral Care Services Team (HOKs)	Reviewed:	September 2019
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Approved by:	Board of Governors		



ATTENDANCE POLICY

In order to achieve the school mission for every student a concise, rigorous and effective school attendance policy is essential.

Rationale: Attendance in school is important for students. Students who attend school consistently, are likely to succeed in academics, build their skills, as well as their character. It is difficult for teachers to track their learning progress and values formation if often a number of students are frequently absent. Hence school attendance is a baseline factor in determining student success.

Aim: St Mary's Catholic School, Muhaisnah Branch (SMM) aims to provide a high-quality education in a safe, caring and disciplined environment so that all students are able to reach their full potential through consistent school attendance.

Principles:

1. SMM supports KHDA's view that all students should attend school regularly and punctually.
2. It is important that all parents and their children know that members of staff value good attendance and punctuality.
3. It is important that parents and members of staff are aware of their responsibilities with regard to the attendance of students.

Purpose:

1. Improve and maintain levels of attendance and punctuality.
2. Minimise disruption to the learning environment caused by lateness and/or absence.
3. Enable students to acquire good habits and self-discipline.
4. Ensure that students have the chance to receive the full range of differentiated learning opportunities, which will enable them to reach their full potential.

Rights and Responsibilities: It is the responsibility of everyone in the SMM community to promote attendance of students. All members of the staff will endeavor to create an atmosphere whereby pupils are willing and enthusiastic to come to school.

The Principal will:

- ensure that registers are kept accurately and that absence figures will be reported as required by KHDA or the Ministry of Education
- decide on parental requests in respect of family holidays.

The Section Head will:

- ensure data is collated for their section and monitor the picture of attendance by grade with the HOKS
- ensure day to day routines for monitoring attendance are being followed.
- work with the HOKS and Head of Pastoral Care Ministry to ensure there is appropriate follow up in cases of attendance issues.



- Chair parent meetings when issues of attendance arise.
- report issues to SLT regarding attendance matters

The Behaviour Head will:

- work with the Head of school to ensure day to day routines for monitoring attendance are being followed.
- ensure reward certificates are issued
- support the HOKS in following up attendance issues and organising Attendance meetings with parents
- report to the Section Head regarding issues with daily routines and staff who are not undertaking attendance registers appropriately

The Class Teacher will:

- keep an accurate record of attendance and absence daily as per policy
- monitor attendance and inform the HOKS if there are concerns or unexplained absence
- encourage attendance and punctuality through the school reward system, and promoting a positive and friendly atmosphere in the classroom

The HOKS will:

- differentiate accurately between authorised and unauthorised absence
- follow up unauthorised absences by calling up parents and reporting to the principal
- clarify authorised and unauthorised absences with the class teacher if there is any doubt as to whether the reason for absence is justifiable
- send appropriate letters to parents if a student's absence gives cause for concern (below 93%)
- keep all absence letters for the academic year or longer if there are serious concerns
- identify poor patterns of attendance and call up parents for discussion or meeting
- assist those families that are experiencing difficulties with school attendance
- report the status of the attendance in their respective Key Stages to the Behaviour Head for proper intervention

The Guidance counsellor will:

- support class teachers, subject teachers and other staff in the development of the whole school approach to maintain and develop excellent attendance and punctuality.
- assist the Behaviour Head for any intervention that might be necessary to improve attendance of students with issues on attendance

Parents are expected to:

- notify the school as soon as possible that their child is absent due to sickness or unavoidable cause
- follow up absences in writing on return to school
- avoid making medical or dental appointments for their child during school hours
- complete a request for absence form which must be submitted to the Principal in advance for permission to take their child away from school for the purposes of a family holiday.

Students are aware of the:

- importance of regular attendance at school
- need to come to school and to lessons punctually
- assistance that a member of staff, SLT, or guidance Counsellor can do, if there is anything which makes them feel unhappy at school and could reduce their willingness to attend.



Strategies to Support Better Attendance and Punctuality:

Due to the context of our school, we understand that at times parents may wish to take their children on extended breaks to visit family abroad. Whilst we understand the importance of such visits, we have a duty to ensure that all students have an equal opportunity to receive a full-time education. Such visits will only be permitted with the prior agreement of the Principal. In making this decision, the current attendance percentage for the child will be taken into consideration before any permission is granted. The school will make arrangements for work to be provided through google classroom for the student during the period of absence and we expect parents to support their children with this work.

If a pattern of concern regarding attendance develops, the relevant HOKS will write to the parents initially, either through email or the Diary. If there is no improvement, the HOKS will invite them to school to discuss the matter. Where appropriate the HOKS will inform the family that future absences on health grounds will no longer be authorised without medical evidence. If there is still no improvement the HOKS will write to the family and advise them that a referral to the Head of Pastoral Care is now going to be made. Where a family has failed to respond to contact attempts (phone calls/invitations to attend meetings) and attendance remains a cause of concern, the Head of Pastoral Care will make an urgent referral to the Principal.

Acknowledging Good Attendance and Punctuality:

- Each Term the class with the best attendance in the Primary School and in the Secondary School will receive a certificate in assembly.
- Weekly attendance figures will be displayed in prominent positions around the school.
- Students achieving 100% attendance and/or 100% punctuality over the course of a term will receive a merit award in assembly.

Authorised and Unauthorised Absence: An absence is considered authorized under any of the following reasons, provided an explanation from parents is received by the staff:

- Illness
- Urgent Dental/Medical appointments
- Family bereavement
- Day of religious observance
- Participation of approved public performance
- Family holiday, where prior approval has been obtained from the Principal
- Exceptional family circumstances.

Absences will remain unauthorised if no legitimate explanation is received from parents or guardians. Parents must take note that the following explanations will not usually be deemed legitimate:

- Looking after siblings
- Shopping Trips
- Unexceptional special occasions, e.g. birthdays
- Family holidays longer than the duration originally authorised by the Principal
- Family holidays where prior permission was not sought or was refused.



If members of staff are unsure how to mark a particular absence they should consult with the HOKS.

In cases where there is doubt about an explanation, contact should be made with the parents.
[*Note: Guidelines for "Absences during Tests and Examinations" can be found in the Student Diary*]